

TAMIYA M4 Sherman Tank 1/48th scale



Brief History

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M4_Sherman

The M4 was originally designed to replace the M3 medium tank, as a medium tank armed with a 75mm gun in a turret, and using many of the components of the M3 to speed production. Designed for efficient mass production two versions of the tank went into production at the end of 1941. The M4 was a tank with a welded hull, characterized by the sharp cornered hull shape, while the M4A1 featured a cast hull with a more rounded shape. The reason for the two styles was that, in order to meet production targets, factories without the ability to handle hull castings were used. These firms could not produce the large armor castings needed for the M4A1 hull, but they were able to produce the welded M4 hull.

When the M4 first entered combat in North Africa in 1942, it was quite successful, but combat experience showed a number of changes were needed. Some of the changes involved improving protection, as the tank's armor was insufficient to stand up to the larger German guns. Additional "appliqué armor" was added at the depot level or in the field by welding additional armor over vulnerable areas, such as the ammo storage bins and gasoline fuel tanks. This propensity to catch fire easily was how the M4 earned the nickname "Ronson", lights the first time every time, or as the Germans called it "Tommy

Cooker". Though after some searching, it appears that the ammunition and not the fuel caused the vast majority of fires.

Production of the M4 exceeded 50,000 units, and its chassis served as the basis for numerous other armored vehicles such as [tank destroyers](#), [tank retrievers](#), and self-propelled [artillery](#). Only [Mikhail Koshkin's](#) design of the Soviet [T-34](#) tank was ultimately produced in larger numbers during World War II.



The kit

I do not build armor kits, but this was free....won at a local model contest a few years ago. I was looking through my stash over Christmas break for something simple and quick. This fit the bill perfectly.

As with all Tamiya kits, the parts are molded very well with no flash, very few mold parting lines and just a few ejector pins marks. Most of these are well placed and hidden from view when assembled. Some reviews criticize the hull weld seams as being too shallow. They should be raised from the surface. Others nit pick on the lack of casting texture on the turret. In 1/48 scale I do not think I could tell the difference anyways.

One of Tamiya's selling points with their 1/48 scale armor kits is the die cast lower hull. This is pre-primed in grey and does add heft to the finished model, but I do not see any other advantage beyond this. There is minimal detail on the hull and you are forced to attach the wheel bogies, transmission cover and rear parts with super glue or epoxy. I would have preferred that this was molded in styrene as the rest of the kit.

The upper hull has open undersides on the sponsons. I left these as is, but if you choose these areas can easily be blanked over with some sheet styrene. The tracks are called link and length. The straight runs are molded as long single pieces and then you need to glue 5-6 separate links to curve around the front and rear sprockets. This saves a lot of time and makes assembly much easier compared to gluing up 70+ links per side.

There are several pioneer tools molded onto the upper hull and several that are separate. I would have preferred that all of these were separate parts for ease of painting. There is also a nice .50 machine gun with a detailed mount and ammunition box.



Construction & Painting

Basic construction consists of three subassemblies; the lower and upper hull plus the turret. Parts were cleaned up and assembled in only a few short hours. Everything fit perfectly....no filler was used at all. Just a little clean up of the seams on the turret and we are already ready for paint. They don't get much easier than this.

I primed everything with grey primer then proceed to airbrush everything with a eyeball mix of Testors dark green/green drab mix. I lightened the centers of each area with

straight green drab. After drying I applied the few decals over the flat paint directly in a pool of Future floor wax. Not a spot of silvering!! When dry I lightly scuffed the US stars with a 6000 grit sanding pad to provide a better worn look and to eliminate any ridge from the Future.



I glued the tracks together to make two halves....an upper and a lower. This allowed me to paint off of the tank and still allow easy assembly after painting. The tracks were painted Testors Metalizer steel and then the rubber pads were painted flat black. The road wheels were brush painted aircraft interior black. Now we are ready for weathering.

I started with a heavy wash of black watercolor paints. When dry I used a moist cloth to remove the majority of the wash. This leaves some wash in the recess, but also since this is done over a flat finish, it has the effect of staining the green base coat just a little. Depending on how damp the cloth is, you can remove the watercolor to varying degrees. After this, everything was sealed with Dullcote. Time for dry brushing. Using a large flat brush I started to dry brush a lighter mix of green drab to bring out all the surface details then following up with a light grey to just pick out the very high spots.

After dry brushing, I applied a quick once over of several pastels to give the model a little bit of an overall dusty appearance.

Attached the machine gun, the pioneer tools and a whip antenna from a cat whisker (these are perfectly tapered) and we are done.

The entire model took a little over a week of off and on building. Total time could not have been more than 6-8 hours. This is a nice little kit, especially for free!! Simple to build yet well detailed. The single color scheme makes painting quick and provides good practice for dry brushing. With a little patience, it is amazing how a single color subject can look more than just "green".

